

2020

Arizona Access to Justice Commission Annual Report



Executive Summary



Like most of the world, the Arizona Commission on Access to Justice and its community partners focused much of its attention in 2020 on the COVID-19 pandemic, along with pursuing existing goals. Highlights from 2020 include:

- Reviewing state and federal changes in the law affecting evictions in Arizona and continuing to provide updated information, forms, and guidance to landlords and tenants. The Commission worked with justice court administrators to design and implement training for court staff and judges on various aspects of the eviction process, and a workgroup was formed to review compliance with the federal CARES Act.
- Collaborating with state and local bar associations, the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, volunteer law librarians and legal aid agencies to provide state-wide educational outreach and create a legal information hotline to assist Arizonans with legal questions arising out of the pandemic, including those relating to housing, debt, and availability of state and federal benefits.
- Working with the Arizona Secretary of State and the Arizona State Librarian to enhance broadband Internet access across rural Arizona to improve virtual access to volunteer legal services and meaningful participation in remote court appearances.
- Continuing the Maricopa County Superior Court's Family Court Navigator program, once again helping more than 100,000 self-represented litigants understand and navigate the court system.
- Expanding and enhancing the content available via [AzCourtHelp.org](https://www.azcourthelp.org), an online legal information resource center that connected hundreds of thousands of individuals with useful legal information and live chat services at a time when they had limited or no access to court buildings or personnel during the pandemic.
- Collaborating with the development and launch of [AZCourtCare.org](https://www.azcourtcare.org), an online legal resource to help users understand and navigate Arizona's mental health system and resources.
- Launching [AZPOINT.azcourts.gov](https://www.azpoint.azcourts.gov), an online resource for victims of domestic violence to start the process for obtaining a protective order.
- Monitoring the design and approval of newly created legal services options: Legal Paraprofessionals and Alternative Business Structures. Both options are designed to improve access to affordable legal help.
- Participating in racial justice efforts, including improving access to civil justice through funded services, volunteer lawyer programs, and pro bono efforts. Arizona's courts are also reviewing ways to improve recruiting minorities and expanding diversity in judicial branch employment, management, and judicial officer roles.
- The continuing availability of a tax credit for donations to charitable organizations resulted in more than \$250,000 earmarked to fund civil legal aid assistance in Arizona.

What follows is the 2020 Annual Report, summarizing the work of the Commission and its partners to help serve the important Arizona Supreme Court Strategic Agenda goal of promoting access to justice.

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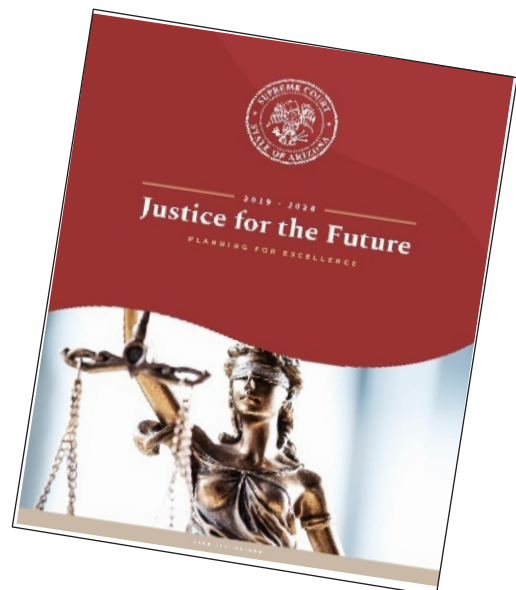


Message from the Chief Justice



The judicial branch's five-year strategic agenda, Justice for the Future: Planning for Excellence, has proven to be a valuable guide through an unexpected public health crisis. The Commission on Access to Justice has leveraged technology, community partnerships, and stakeholder networks to improve access to justice while limiting access to courthouses for the safety of all. Remote appearances, online materials and training, and increased legal help options have made the best of a bad situation and allowed Arizona's courts to serve the public in ways that also protect their health. See inside this year's report for the Commission's innovative responses.

*Chief Justice Robert Brutinel
Arizona Supreme Court*



From the Commission

The COVID-19 pandemic dominated our lives in most of 2020, including access to justice issues. The pandemic demonstrated, again, that the fragility of what seemed to be a secure economy has increased public awareness of the effect of evictions on families and the community and the need to address the affordable housing crisis that exists throughout Arizona and elsewhere.

Without question, slowed economic recovery from the pandemic means an increase in Arizona's poverty population and a continued increase in demand for civil legal assistance in housing, employment, debt, and benefit denial matters.

Legal aid agencies remain overwhelmed with demand for civil legal assistance. These agencies face actual or potential loss of funding, threatening not only the timely delivery of legal services but also the capacity to administer an effective volunteer lawyer program. Quick access to useful legal information that can be understood and used by self-represented litigants ("SRLs") remains a critical need.

Although phone/virtual court appearances are more convenient – particularly for those in rural settings and where transportation issues are particularly challenging – it may not be as helpful as the "day in court" experience where the SRL can physically appear before a judge. Additionally, for remote appearances, complications with the extent and reliability of broadband services in rural areas are an on-going concern. But, perhaps surprisingly, there were positive developments as a result of the pandemic:

First, there has been increased community scrutiny of the civil justice system and encouragement for stakeholders to collaborate and create a more efficient and equitable system. The pandemic also promoted meaningful collaboration between branches of government. In 2020, discussions with the Governor's Office, the Arizona Department of Housing, local government leaders, non-profit community organizations, and other stakeholders led to a more coordinated effort to create eviction diversion programs and to provide civil legal assistance for constituents with housing issues.

Second, by allowing remote appearances, the courts discovered flexibility in providing an efficient and effective alternative to in-person hearings. The option to appear remotely greatly increased the percentage of SRLs participating in court hearings, a cornerstone of the administration of justice. A commitment is in place to extend reliable broadband coverage throughout the state, including rural areas. The success of remote appearances has reinforced the need to continue efforts to enhance and expand existing online dispute resolution options.

Third, the pandemic encouraged courts to emphasize targeted judicial education and training and refine the focus on due process and other procedural safeguards for dealing with SRLs, particularly in eviction and debt collection/foreclosure actions.

Entering 2021, the Arizona Commission on Access to Justice will continue improving the opportunity for all to meaningfully participate in the civil justice system. We will continue monitoring the evolving challenges involving financial, employment and housing issues, and will work with our partners – including the State Bar of Arizona, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Arizona Bar Foundation and Arizona's legal aid agencies – to ensure the public has readily accessible and useful legal information.

The Commission also will continue to encourage financial support for legal aid agencies and other entities who assist Arizona's poverty population and those of modest means with their civil legal challenges.



Judge Lawrence F. Winthrop, Co-Chair
Judge Samuel A. Thumma, Co-Chair

Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In partnership with the State Bar of Arizona, the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, Arizona's legal aid entities and with support from the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Governor's Office, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education ("Bar Foundation") launched the Legal Information Hotline.

The Hotline is staffed by legal aid attorneys, volunteer lawyers, law school students, and legal professionals. Through the Legal Information Hotline, more than 760 callers received referral to a free 30-minute consultation provided by volunteer attorneys recruited by the State Bar of Arizona.

Partners include Maricopa, Pima, and Yavapai County Bar Associations and the Arizona Legal Center. In 2020 operators provided more than 3,700 hours answering calls on the Hotline.



3,700
hours



2,700
calls



61,132
online
visitors



765
referrals

COVID-19 Legal Hotline

<https://azbar.org/for-the-public/legal-help-education/covid-19-legal-hotline/>



In late March 2020, the Foundation launched a COVID-19 Legal Information site via [AZLawHelp.org](https://covid19.azlawhelp.org/). The site provides important legal information and resources related to the pandemic's impact on the law.

<https://covid19.azlawhelp.org/>



Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Federal, state, and local governments approved emergency relief and economic stimulus aid in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Arizona was declared eligible for federal disaster relief funds with a portion of those funds dedicated to assist people who lost their jobs or homes as a result of the pandemic. In Arizona, funds for civil legal assistance were included as part of the \$50 million earmarked for the poverty population. A request for additional federal funding of \$150 million remained pending at the end of 2020.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pew Charitable Trust issued a detailed report and recommendations on potential reform measures in debt collection disputes.



How Debt Collectors Are Transforming the Business of State Courts

Recommendations include:

- tracking data on debt claims,
- educating legislators on the current disadvantages that debtors face,
- reviewing and redesigning court rules and procedures to ensure all parties understand their options,
- and can effectively participate in resolution of these claims.

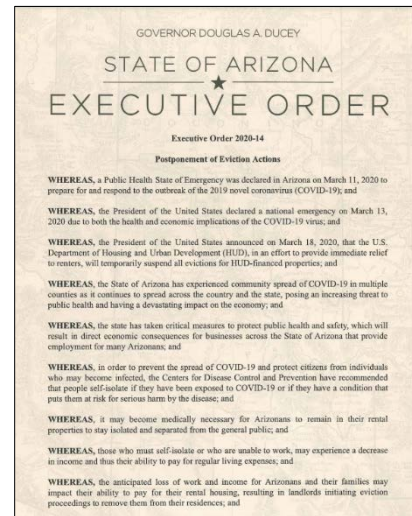
COVID-19

INFORMATION & UPDATES

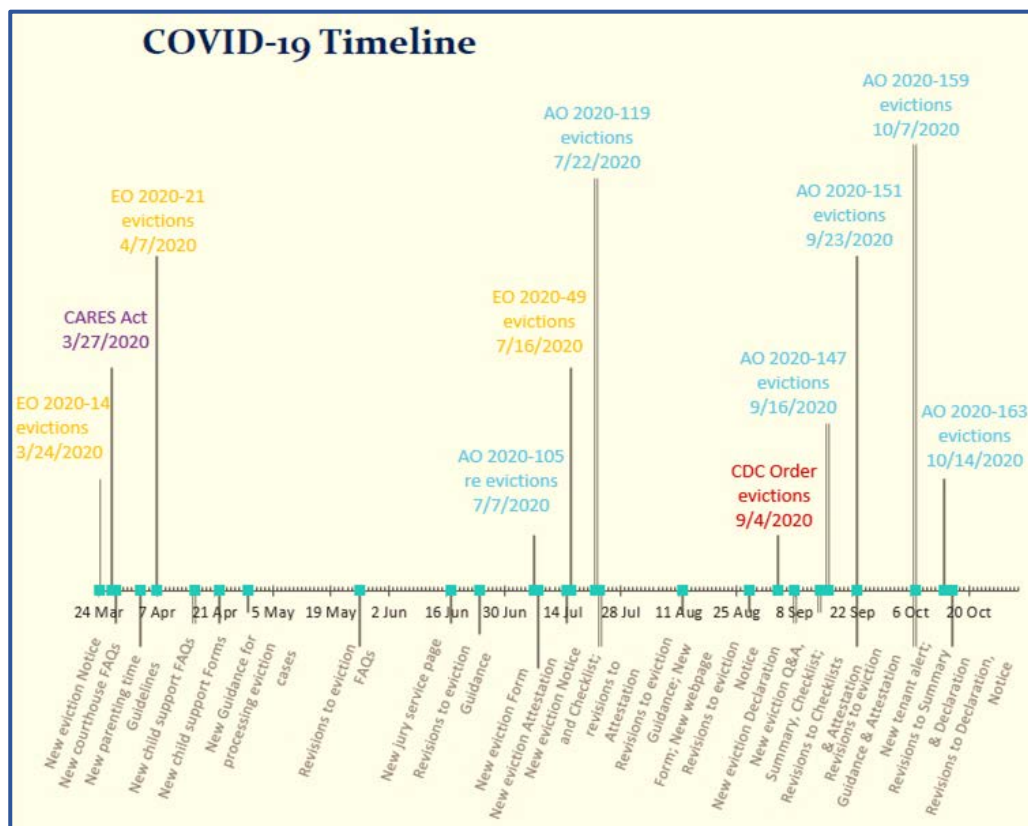
Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Arizona COVID-19 Timeline below begins on March 24, 2020, when Governor Doug Ducey issued Executive Order 2020-14, which postponed the enforcement of eviction actions. Subsequent state and federal agency orders are identified in the upper section of the timeline.

Multiple statewide orders, directives, and memoranda (not included in the timeline) were issued by the Arizona Supreme Court and the Administrative Office of the Courts to update and assist court clerks, administrators, and judges in the state with implementation efforts regarding eviction-related actions and orders.

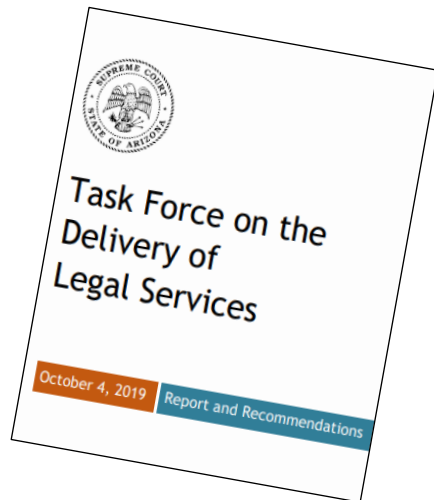


These eviction efforts were clearly important to the public as reflected in overall eviction-related web traffic increases compared to last year. In a month-to-month comparison, the timing of such increased web traffic is revealing. Sharp increases can be seen after Governor Ducey, President Trump, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) issued their respective orders regulating and/or postponing the enforcement of eviction actions.



Reforms in Delivery of Legal Services

In 2020, the Arizona Supreme Court unanimously approved a series of legal reforms designed to improve access to justice in Arizona, as recommended by the Arizona Delivery of Legal Services Task Force (“Task Force”). See [Task Force on Delivery of Legal Services Report and Recommendations](#).



Among other reforms, the Task Force recommendations will result in affordable legal services being available through a new tier of legal service provider, “Legal Paraprofessionals,” and through approved “Alternative Business Structures,” which are joint ownership ventures between lawyers and nonlawyers. These new legal services options require completion of designated educational requirements, an application, and certification by the Arizona Supreme Court. New legal services providers will be subject to regulatory oversight by the State Bar of Arizona and the Supreme Court to ensure client and public protection.

What’s this about? Access to Legal Services

<https://www.azcourts.gov/accesstolegalservices/Whats-This-All-About>

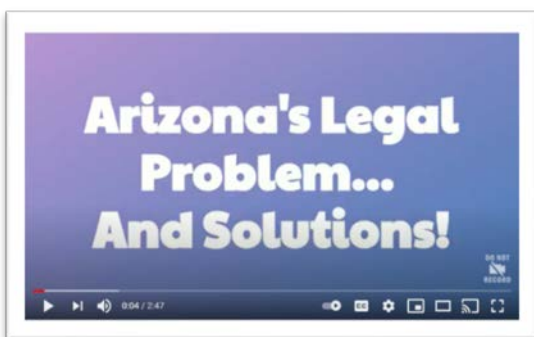


Reforms in Delivery of Legal Services

Arizona Supreme Court [Vice Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer](#), Chair of the Delivery of Legal Services Task Force, publicly outlined the need for and anticipated operation of these legal services reforms on television, through educational panels, articles, and podcasts. The Task Force's innovative recommendations were nationally recognized by business and law media outlets and are being considered as a model for bar associations in other states as well as other professional legal associations contemplating innovative options.

How Arizona is Pioneering a Path for Access to Justice Podcast with Vice Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer

<https://legalkarma.org/how-arizona-is-pioneering-a-path-for-access-to-justice/>



Virtual Resource Centers and Law Libraries

Legal Talks

Arizona law libraries have provided uninterrupted service to court customers during the COVID-19 crisis in many ways, including:

- on-site assistance,
- curbside pickup,
- phone help,
- *AZCourtHelp.org* Live Chat,
- local chat lines,
- and email.



To find information about chatting online with a State Law Librarian check out <https://azcourthelp.org/live-chat>.

2019

Number of Live Chat Operators – 9
Number of Chat Sessions – 923
Chat Hours – 149
Average Length of Chat Sessions – 9 mins

2020

Number of Live Chat Operators – 12
Number of Chat Sessions – 3,938
Chat Hours – 632.5
Average Length of Chat Sessions – 10 mins

Free “Legal Talks” were held at the Coconino County Law Library in the Legal Talks classroom as well as at the Yuma County Courthouse. The talks are a collaboration between the Superior Court in Coconino County and its Virtual Resource Center, the Arizona Attorney General’s Office, the State Library of Arizona, the Department of Economic Security and experts who present on their topics of expertise. Legal Talks are broadcast live, allowing anyone to attend from a computer or mobile device, and are also available for later viewing at [AZCourtHelp.org](https://azcourthelp.org).

**Free Legal Talk Series**
February 3-5, 2021

Wednesday, 2/3 11-11:45 a.m.	Thursday, 2/4 12-12:45 p.m.	Friday, 2/5 11-11:45 a.m.
Probate & Estate Planning	Neighbor Law	Student Loan Debt Options
Angela Moore Moore, Matson & Moore, PLLC	Christopher Combs Combs Law Group, PC	Lisa Thompson Thompson Law Group, PC

Online at:
<https://azcourthelp.org/public-events>

Virtual Resource Centers and Law Libraries



In partnership with AmeriCorps, the Maricopa County Law Library Resource Center continues to operate and manages a family court navigator program, formally known as Providing Access to Court Services, or “PACS.”

The court trains and supervises qualified undergraduate students who serve court customers in the Customer Service and Protective Order areas and at the Information Desks. They help identify appropriate court forms, serve as scribes for court customers when needed and provide navigational and court escort assistance. Many of the navigators speak languages other than English, which extends the court’s efforts to provide meaningful access to court services.

The students who serve as Court Navigators can earn college credit and a monetary stipend for their service. To date, a significant percentage of Court Navigators have gone on to attend law school or to work in the court system in Arizona and elsewhere.

County Law Libraries Self-Service Centers

**Cochise County
Coconino County
Maricopa County
Mohave County
Pima County
Pinal County
Yavapai County
Yuma County**

Virtual Resource Centers and Law Libraries

AZCourtHelp.org



The [AZCourtHelp.org](https://azcourthelp.org) website, administered by the Bar Foundation through the support of the Arizona Supreme Court, works in partnership with the courts across Arizona and their law libraries to provide current legal information and forms, organized by topic. The site also provides detailed information about all of Arizona's courts, including location, video tours, payment options, and access to court dockets.

In 2020, usage for [AZCourtHelp.org](https://azcourthelp.org) topped 500,000 pageviews.

Court Location & Contact Information:

149,951 pageviews

Traffic Information:

42,149 pageviews

Family Law Information/Forms:

126,639 pageviews

Protective Order Information/Forms:

32,533 pageviews

Eviction Information/Forms:

83,149 pageviews

Legal Aid Resources & Legal Representation:

17,379 pageviews

Marriage & Wedding Information: 80,427
pageviews

These resources provided helpful information on various legal topics, including:

- Assisting people who need to use court services with finding the practical information they need about their court: location, hours, terms of payment, parking, accessibility, etc.
- Arizona law librarian-provided live chat forums to answer legal information questions, details on upcoming Legal Talk clinics, and other information needed by self-represented litigants.
- Links and resources to other specialized legal information websites that provide broader legal information and access, and when possible, to free and reduced legal assistance.



In 2020, [AZCourtHelp.org](https://azcourthelp.org) worked with the Arizona Supreme Court Committee on Mental Health and the Justice System to develop an online resource for those seeking crisis-related information about mental treatment resources and options in Arizona. This collaboration resulted in the creation of the [AZCourtCare.org](https://azcourtcare.org) website.

This site includes basic information about the legal process, practical advice on what to do and who to call in a crisis, access to forms and other resources applicable for use in any Arizona county, a glossary of terms, and a collection of acronyms to assist individuals understand and navigate through the process. See <https://azcourtcare.org/>.

Virtual Resource Centers and Law Libraries

Law4AZ is a collaboration between the Access to Justice Commission, the Arizona Secretary of State and the Arizona State Librarian. Law4AZ is working to strategically build Arizona public libraries' capacity to connect their patrons with useful legal information and access to resources. Law4AZ has trained volunteer law librarians around the state to help educate public librarians on how to help patrons find useful law-related information. At the same time, these volunteers assess each public library's tech-readiness and ability to access AZCourtHelp Legal Talks broadcasts.

In 2020, the [Law4AZ](#) program was awarded a \$7,500 federal grant to update its statewide training program through August 2021. The first phase of the update plan focuses on information gathering on underserved areas. The second phase focuses on training public librarians in the underserved areas how to assist their patrons in accessing useful legal information and resources, all with the goal of increasing access to civil justice for the affected communities.

In partnership with Coconino Geographic Information Systems, in 2020 and continuing in 2021, Law4AZ is gathering demographic information and surveying 206 public libraries, 187 court buildings, and 15 law libraries/self-help centers about resources available to self-represented litigants. This work will result in a map that will further demonstrate the justice gap across Arizona, allowing public libraries to target services toward communities with the greatest need.

In 2021 and 2022, Law4AZ will launch training and technology-building services for public libraries in the most-underserved communities and partner with the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education to create online videos of those trainings. Follow this project's status at:

<https://statelibraryofarizona.wordpress.com/law4az/>.



CISCO Systems, Inc., is partnering with the Arizona State Library to install new external wireless access points to provide broadband internet capability to underserved rural areas, which in turn will help facilitate the delivery of useful information and legal assistance to those communities.



Self-Service Center and Legal Info Hub

The Arizona Supreme Court continues to enhance and expand the content of its online Self-Service Center and Legal Info Hub at <https://www.azcourts.gov/selfservicecenter> making it easier for self-represented litigants to navigate and find information.

Enhancements are being incorporated to highlight notes and disclaimers to users; improve navigation with web pages, user-friendly buttons, cross-references to other resources; and directing users to fee waiver and deferral information and forms.

In 2020, new content was developed for small claims, domestic violence, eviction, life care planning, language assistance, making payments, lottery winnings and tax intercepts, traffic ticket enforcement assistance program, and mental health and the justice system. The content includes new and revised webpages, forms, flowcharts, Legal Info Sheets, FAQs, and informational videos.

New content is available in English and Spanish. Work is underway to develop new or updated content and resources for housing/eviction, consumer debt, warrants, treatment courts, guardianship and conservatorship of an adult, and other probate-related areas. Internet traffic to the Self-Service Center continues to increase compared to previous years for both English and Spanish sites.

Internet traffic to the Legal Info Hub at <https://www.azcourts.gov/legalinfohub> also is growing as new Legal Info Sheets, FAQs, and videos become available to the public.



The COVID-19 pandemic prompted extensive expansion of bi-lingual, web-related legal information and resources available at: <https://www.azcourts.gov/legalinfohub>, including an extensive FAQ section, podcasts, legal information videos, legal information sheets, and a self-service center.

<https://www.azcourts.gov/legalinfohub>

Online Dispute Resolution



Court-related Online Dispute Resolution (“ODR”) creates a digital space that parties in certain types of legal disputes can use to more conveniently resolve their court case. ODR has many benefits, including ease of use, 24/7 access and a more efficient and affordable for users. The Commission brought this issue and its potential to increase the public’s participation in their court cases to the Administrative Office of the Courts, which approved further investigation and the creation of pilot programs to evaluate the use of ODR in Arizona.

In 2020, family courts in Yuma and Pinal Counties participated in ODR pilot programs. The Scottsdale Municipal Court also piloted misdemeanor and parking case ODR programs in 2020. Maricopa County piloted ODR programs in its courts for civil debt collection and child support enforcement cases. During these pilot programs, data on various aspects of the programs are being gathered from various sources to help determine critical next steps.

Encouraging Pro Bono Participation

The Bar Foundation's Pro Bono Portal identifies pro bono opportunities for lawyers around the state. At its 2020 convention, the State Bar of Arizona sponsored a statewide webinar on pro bono opportunities available to lawyers both in private practice and those employed by the government. The webinar featured presentations by multiple members of the Commission. Additionally, the Commission actively supported the Supreme Court's recent Rule 38 revision that allows and encourages retired and inactive lawyers to volunteer pro bono civil legal services.

<https://probono.azbf.org/>

Congratulating the 2020

Top Pro Bono Attorneys

Giselle Alexander	Charles McTheny
Daniel Arrellano	Kathryn B. Nelson
Logan Boren	Thomas Niemeir
Florence Bruemmer	Tom Nolasco
Ian Bucon	Paul Nordini
Anna Ceder	Judith O'Neill
Robert Charles, Jr.	Lisa Panahi
Amie Clarke	Nathan Parkey
Stasy Click	Melanie Pate
Jennison Cox	William Poorten, III
Annette Cox Sandoval	Kelly Rowe
Suzanne L. Diaz	Kevin Rudh
Catherine Fine	Gustavo Schneider
Erin K. Fox	Lisa Anne Smith
Shannon Giles	Sean Smith
Gloria Goldman	Sesaly Stamps
John F. Gordon	Shawn Stone
Kristen Hanna	Janet Story
Gregory Hing	Hannah Torres
Gary Kraft	Nancy Tribbensee
Peggy Lemoine	Geoff Ulreich
Sandra Lyons	Emily Ward
John MacKinnon	Edythe Suzanne Whitaker
Patrick Mause	Katherine Winkley
Philip Jay McCarthy	Jeffrey Wohlford

If you are interested in joining the ranks of these amazing volunteers contact the Foundation at 602-340-7366.

Arizona Foundation for
**LEGAL SERVICES
& EDUCATION**
THE ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION

Arizona Tax Credit Funding Support

Donations can be made directly to the agencies on the Arizona Bar Foundation's website:
<https://www.azbf.org/donate-now/participating-charitable-tax-credit-approved>.

\$265,208
raised for legal aid
agencies in 2020!

Support Access to Justice through the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit

Roughly 25% of Arizonans have an income stream that qualifies them for free civil legal aid services. But, for every 3 people in Arizona who realize they have a legal problem and contact a legal aid office, 2 must be turned away because of a lack of resources.

**Charitable Tax Credit
donations directly
reduce the amount you
owe and let you direct
where your funds go!**

Approved Legal Aid Agencies

Arizona Justice Project

**Arizona Legal Women and Youth
Services**

Christian Legal Aid of Arizona

Community Legal Services Inc.

Defenders of Children

DNA People's Legal Services

**Florence Immigrants & Refugee Rights
Project**

**SALA's Tucson Family Advocacy
Program**

Southern Arizona Legal Aid Inc. (SALA)

Step Up to Justice

William E. Morris Institute for Justice

Arizona Foundation for
**LEGAL SERVICES
& EDUCATION**
THE ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION

Workgroup Reports

Judicial and Attorney Engagement Workgroup

The Workgroup continued its efforts to increase pro bono participation by public lawyers by identifying appropriate opportunities for those lawyers and reducing barriers to participation.

The Workgroup is developing a web portal for judicial officers to learn about pro bono and community service opportunities.

Workgroup members also collaborated with retired lawyers and the State Bar to utilize recently amended Rule 38 to encourage pro bono service by retired lawyers.

CARES Act Compliance Workgroup

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided a moratorium on eviction filings for properties financed by certain federal loan programs and properties participating in specific federal subsidy or voucher programs. The CARES Act moratorium prohibited eviction actions involving these defined properties from March 27, 2020 until late August 2020, given a 30-day notice requirement.

Unfortunately, reports and investigation indicate that hundreds of Arizona evictions for these defined properties may have proceeded in violation of the CARES Act. As a result, this ad hoc, limited-duration workgroup was formed to provide public awareness and education and promote access to court forms and other resources concerning eviction proceedings that did not comply with the CARES Act.

The workgroup met in late 2020 and continues in 2021. It is anticipated that the workgroup will complete its work in 2021.

Judicial and Attorney Engagement

Hon. Joseph Kreamer, Chair
Superior Court in Maricopa County

Hon. Thomas Berning
Tucson City Court

Pamela Bridge
Community Legal Services, Inc.

Joel England
State Bar of Arizona

Pat Gerrich
Community Legal Services, Inc.

Kevin Groman
Association of Corporate Counsel

Michele Mirto
Step up to Justice

Hon. Jennifer Perkins
Arizona Court of Appeals

Kevin Ruegg Ph.D.
Arizona Foundation for Legal
Services & Education

The CARES Act Compliance Workgroup has four subgroups addressing:

1. Public Education and Resources;
2. Court-based Solutions;
3. Litigation-based Solutions and
4. Quick Analysis and Education in Response to Future Federal Pandemic

Workgroup Reports

Self-Represented Litigants in Limited Jurisdiction Courts Workgroup

In 2020 the Self-Represented Litigants in Limited Jurisdiction Courts workgroup completed the work on videos and legal information sheets on evictions and air conditioning repair disputes it had started in 2019. Additionally, the workgroup worked closely with the Bar Foundation, Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Community Legal Services and Step Up to Justice representatives regarding updated eviction-related data during the pandemic.

Other work completed in 2020 included informational videos on subsidized housing and military services and updates to the Residential Eviction Procedures Information Sheet referenced in the Rules of Procedure for Eviction Actions.

The workgroup anticipated that even with an eviction moratorium in place, other pandemic-related economic hardships would continue to grow. As such, it recognized the need for expanded information and resources related to consumer debt issues and is continuing its work on consumer debt-related legal information, including YouTube videos and legal information sheets.

The workgroup membership now includes attorneys from the debt collection and consumer defense bars.

Membership

Hon. Anna Huberman, Chair
Maricopa County Justice Courts

Pamela Bridge
Community Legal Services, Inc.

Charles Adornetto
Maricopa County Justice Courts

Shelly Bacon
Superior Court in Coconino County

Mike Baumstark
Administrative Office of the Courts

Scott Davis
Maricopa County Justice Courts

Veronika Fabian
Choi & Fabian, PLC

Stanley Hammerman
Hammerman & Hultgren

Denise Holliday
Holliday & Holliday, P.C.

Paul Julian
Arizona Supreme Court

Eric Logvin
Law Office of James R. Vaughan,
P.C.

John Skiba
Arizona Consumer Law Group

Workgroup Reports

Inter-Governmental Collaboration Workgroup

Throughout 2020, the Intergovernmental Collaboration Workgroup's efforts have focused on partnerships with state and local governments to increase access to legal information and services during the pandemic. Specifically, the workgroup assisted with efforts to:

- Request that, in light of the federal pandemic relief funding being distributed to local governments, city and county elected leaders throughout Arizona recognize and prioritize legal assistance as an “essential service” for constituents. This request led the City of Phoenix to partner with Community Legal Services and direct some of its CARES Act funding to support eviction prevention legal services for those in need.
- Encourage the creation of a COVID-19 statewide legal information Hotline and free volunteer lawyer consultation. The Hotline is a collaboration between the Governor's Office, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the State Bar of Arizona, the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, the Arizona's legal aid programs, multiple county bar associations and the Bar Foundation. Launched May 20, 2020, the Hotline received 3,000 calls in 2020 from Arizonans needing legal information related to the pandemic and referred more than 800 callers for free half-hour consultations with volunteer attorneys.
- Increase access to legal information for the public related to changes in Arizona law and provide enhanced technology to access Arizona courts. Special COVID-19 pages were created online in the existing *AZLawHelp.org* and *AZCourtHelp.org* platforms, providing updated information about Housing/Eviction, Family Law, Consumer Law/Debt, Protective Orders, Unemployment and Employment matters, and identifying additional resources for legal help. *AZCourtHelp.org* added licenses for its online chat feature, staffed by volunteer law librarians. Not surprisingly, legal information provided via chat more than doubled since April over the same time a year ago.

Membership

Hon. Lawrence F. Winthrop. Chair

Pamela Bridge
Community Legal Services, Inc.

Beth Ann Broeker
Arizona Department of Juvenile
Corrections

Christina Corieri
Arizona Governor's Office

Anni L. Foster
Office of the Governor

Kevin Groman
Association of Corporate Counsel -
Pro Bono Committee

Chris Groninger
Arizona Foundation for Legal
Services & Education

Karen Lash, Consultant
Justice in Government

Maria Morlacci
Arizona Attorney General

Janet K. Regner
AOC - Court Services Division

Ms. Kevin Ruegg Ph.D.
Arizona Foundation for Legal
Services & Education

Hon. Joseph Welty
Superior Court in Maricopa County

Anthony Young
Southern Arizona Legal Aid

The Intergovernmental Collaboration Workgroup reported progress on other fronts during 2020:

Guardianship – efforts related to reentry and kinship care have continued on a regional or service area basis in collaboration with community-based partners, and coordination/assistance was provided to legal aid agencies in submitting applications for legal services funding in this critical area.

Evictions – The Bar Foundation has continued to work with the Arizona Department of Housing in furtherance of its eviction prevention pilot project, providing targeted information and resources for eviction prevention in Pima and Maricopa Counties. We anticipate those efforts will continue in 2021 and include allocation of supplemental federal funding to eviction-related legal services. In the interim, workgroup members:

- Are active participants in various regional and statewide stakeholder group meetings addressing the eviction crisis.
- Have regularly met with local and state elected officials to discuss solutions to the current eviction crisis and steps to contain future eviction related issues.
- Are communicating with national housing advocacy groups and evaluating efforts in other states and jurisdictions related to eviction prevention.

Domestic Violence Legal Document Preparer Pilot Project – Domestic Violence Legal Document Preparer Pilot Project – Administrative Order 2020-25 authorized a new pilot project to increase access to free civil legal help for victims of domestic violence. The goal of the pilot project is to train and license existing lay legal advocates based in domestic violence shelter programs across the state to prepare legal documents related to family law, housing, consumer, and protective order matters, all under the supervision of legal aid lawyers. If successful, this project may be replicated with other non-profit entities and social work professionals to increase access to critically needed civil legal assistance. Currently, court administrators and legal aid representatives continue to develop project guidelines and the project has received 11 applications from lay legal advocates across the state to participate.

Arizona Crime Victim Technology – A collaborative technology project grant was awarded by the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime to develop an online resource for Arizona crime victims needing civil legal information and services. This project has brought together legal service providers, crime victim advocates and various government, law enforcement, social service, and prosecutorial agencies across the state. The launch date for distribution of funding for these services is anticipated in Spring 2021.

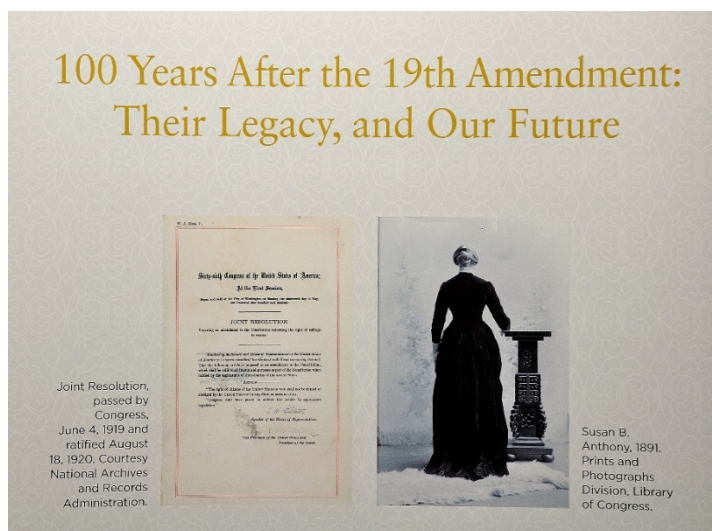
Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funds – In early 2020, workgroup representatives met with Arizona's VOCA administrator to discuss a statewide project to expand civil legal assistance to all victims of crime. After VOCA released the application for the next round of funding, members assisted legal aid programs in preparing and coordinating their proposals for funding in this area. As a result, each program received an increase to their VOCA awards for the coming year.

Workgroup Reports

Public Information and Messaging Workgroup

The Public Information and Messaging Workgroup took efforts throughout the year to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on maintaining meaningful access to all of Arizona's courts. Members worked with court leadership and administrators, bar associations, and law libraries to share timely bi-lingual information and guidance about evictions, online resources, court operations and services, and jury service. Court closure information, operational updates, and pandemic-related communications were distributed through social media, websites, news releases, and participation in local and national community education and training efforts.

The Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts secured a replica of a traveling exhibit on the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote. The exhibit was intended to be displayed around the state, but after a stop in Mohave County, the pandemic prevented its display as a traveling, in-person exhibit. As an alternative, a virtual exhibit was posted online at <https://www.azcourts.gov/newsandinfo/Press-Releases-News/19thAmendment100>.



Membership

Aaron Nash, Chair
Administrative Office of the Courts

Kip Anderson
Superior Court in Mohave County

Cathleen Cole
Arizona Foundation for Legal
Services & Education

Scott Davis
Maricopa Justice and City Courts

Tiarra Earls Haas
Superior Court in Maricopa County

Jessica Fotinos
Superior Court in Maricopa County

Gretchen Hornberger
Coconino County Law Library

Tara Jackson
Arizona Town Hall

Amy Love
Superior Court in Maricopa County
(during 2020)

Alicia Moffatt
Administrative Office of the Courts

Helen Purcell
Public Member

Alberto Rodriguez
State Bar of Arizona

Kevin Ruegg Ph.D.
Arizona Foundation for Legal
Services & Education

Lara Slifko
Arizona Foundation for Legal
Services & Education

Legal Service Providers COVID-19 Efforts

Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA)



SALA provides civil legal aid to people who would not otherwise have equal access to justice, and is dedicated to promoting family stability, strengthening neighborhoods and improving the quality of life for all our communities. Pre-COVID-19, SALA worked out of dedicated locations serving Pima & Santa Cruz

Counties; Pinal County; Navajo/Apache/Gila Counties and Cochise/Graham/Greenlee Counties. *See: sazlegalaid.org* During the pandemic, SALA offices closed to in-person interactions and transitioned to working remotely to assist clients. To maintain services, SALA expanded its call center and directed clients to their website. Most requests for legal assistance in 2020 were for housing and unemployment. To adapt to the virtual service model, SALA applied for a COVID-19-related grant from the Arizona Community Fund to purchase cellphones, mobile hotspots and laptops for staff.

Community Legal Services (CLS)

CLS is a non-profit law firm that has worked for decades to increase fairness in the civil justice system on behalf of Arizona's most underserved communities. Pre-COVID-19, CLS worked out of dedicated locations serving Maricopa, Yavapai, Mohave, La Paz and Yuma Counties. *See clsaz.org* During the pandemic, CLS likewise transitioned its intake



services to telephone and online interactions. Through an extensive outreach effort, CLS sent COVID-19-related information to farmworkers and community partners on landlord notification, unemployment resources, and stimulus checks. In addition, CLS in 2020 conducted 13 legal lunchtime webinars on a variety of topics, many of which were related to COVID-19-specific legal issues.

DNA People's Legal Services (DNA)



DNA is an eight office, nonprofit law firm in the Southwest that provides free civil legal services to low-income people who otherwise could not afford to hire an attorney. Pre-COVID-19, DNA's Arizona offices included Navajo Nation offices, Hopi offices as well as offices in Window Rock and Flagstaff. *See dnalegalservices.org*. DNA's service area is large because the Navajo Nation encompasses parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. At different times during the pandemic, the Navajo Nation was subject to stay-home orders and curfews and DNA staff was self-quarantined in an abundance of caution for the protection of the public and staff.

The Hopi Nation, which is located within the Navajo Nation and New Mexico, also implemented strict regulations regarding travel.

As a result of these restrictions, DNA transitioned to a combination of working remotely, posting updated information on their website regarding COVID-19, and referring clients to the *AZLawHelp* website. DNA applied for a COVID-19-related grant from the Arizona Community Fund to purchase cellphones, mobile hotspots and laptops for staff.

Selected Public Presentations

Over the past several years, Commission members have regularly taken part in presentations, meetings, and events across Arizona and the country concerning access to justice initiatives.

Due to the widespread impact of the COVID-19 virus, however, and the restrictions in place because of that pandemic, the nature and extent of public presentations concerning access to justice issues and the work and recommendations of the Commission were also significantly restricted. Nevertheless, a select list of public presentations (most of which were virtual) during 2020 included:

- Gretchen Hornberger, Coconino County Law Librarian, “Law4AZ Library Project 2.0,” February 4, 2020.
- Greg Hanchett, Director of the Arizona Office of Administrative Hearings, “Self-Represented Litigants: Public Information, Website Resources and Training for Administrative Law Judges,” May 14, 2020.
- Judges Joseph Kreamer & Lawrence Winthrop, Arizona State Bar Convention, “The New Rule 38: Senior/Retired lawyer Pro Bono Opportunities,” recorded September 10, 2020; aired with live Question and Answers, December 2, 2020.
- Judge Lawrence Winthrop, ABA National Meeting of State Access to Justice Commission Chairs, Opening Plenary Panel “Where is the ATJ Commission Movement Headed in the 2020s and Beyond?” (with Amy Johnson, Judge Mark Juhas, and Justice Maria Kahn), September 30, 2020.
- Cathleen Cole, Arizona Bar Foundation, Ignite Talk, Closing Plenary National Meeting of State Access to Justice Commission Chairs, “A Website’s Key to Success – Interagency Collaborations (AZCourtHelp.org and AZCourtCare.org)” October 29, 2020.
- Judge Lawrence Winthrop, ABA National Meeting of State Access to Justice Commission Chairs, breakout session, “Justice in Government” project (with Karen Lash) November 17, 2020.
- Patricia Lee Refo, President American Bar Association, “ABA Support for Access to Justice Initiatives,” November 19, 2020.
- Professor Rebecca Sandefur, “Understanding the Justice Gap and the Potential for Non-Legal Service Providers to Help Bridge That Gap,” November 19, 2020.



Selected Access to Justice Advancements Contributed by Arizona's Courts in 2020 and beyond.

The courts faced unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and responded by advancing access to justice in new and different ways. Recognizing these efforts, the Commission solicited examples of local court advancements to include in this Annual Report. What follows are brief summaries of those access to justice advancements by local courts throughout Arizona that the Commission received in response to that solicitation.



Ajo Justice Court
111 La Mina Avenue
Ajo, AZ 85321

- After the COVID-19 pandemic began, the court began scheduling initial appearance hearings after the prosecutor decided to file charges against the defendant.
- Before COVID-19 initial appearances were done in-person, given the need for signed attestation to receiving advisement of constitutional rights and, when required, a signed waiver-of-attorney to allow contact with the county attorney. During the pandemic, with increased telephonic appearances, litigants are advised that these forms are being dated and signed in the telephonic hearing, asked to declare they understand this to be the case, and informed that they will need to sign and return the appropriate paperwork, with these steps noted in the court's orders.
- Most appearances are processed by telephone and virtual appearances and by mail.
- The court substantially enhanced its health and safety protocols while ensuring access to court services.

Clerk of the Superior Court in Maricopa County
620 West Jackson
Phoenix, AZ 85003

- Developed and delivered an online and off-site cash payment system increasing access for customers to pay court obligations such as fees, fines and restitution and helping them to overcome challenges with transportation, schedules and resources.
- Expanded eFile systems providing customers' ability to initiate civil cases remotely and began development for the same in family court cases. Since launch, 84 percent of civil cases have been initiated as a result of this process, saving customers valuable time and resources.

- Expanded eFile systems in juvenile court matters resulting in a 90 percent increase of related eFile activity since launch.
- In a period of just 45 days, designed, developed, and delivered an online portal for customers to remotely submit exhibits resulting in up to 15,000 exhibits being submitted monthly through the portal.
- Developed and delivered an intuitive customer website used by 5,000 customers every day. It includes a Virtual Assistant, Online Chat, access to online services, and COVID-related information.
- Launched omni-channel IBM Watson Technology that is serving 2,400 customers every month, allowing users to receive information from an artificial intelligence-enabled Virtual Assistant named Cleo, through text, email, phone, web chat, Alexa and Google.
- Expanded existing technology to provide online appointments and remote check-in for file counter services providing for expedited service and time savings.
- Developed and delivered an online marriage license application process.
- Completed phase one of an initiative to automate data entry and workflows through the application of intelligent capture technology, a form of artificial intelligence that will allow for saved time and resources to be redirected where they can be more helpful, particularly to self-represented litigants.
- Developed and implemented a robust public outreach and education initiative to promote awareness and use of remote services.

Maricopa County Superior Court
201 West Jefferson Street
Central Court Building
Phoenix, AZ 85003

- The court worked with Microsoft and For the Record (FTR) to design, develop and implement an online, virtual platform to allow litigants continued access to court proceedings without needing to appear in person. The platform, known as Court Connect, is used in the Criminal, Civil, Probate/Mental Health, Family, and Juvenile Departments. Since its October 2020 rollout, more than 30,000 hearings and events have occurred using the Court Connect platform. To ensure access for those without access to a computer and/or smart phone, the Juvenile Department provides on-site access to computer equipment for parents in dependency and delinquency matters.
- To ensure the safety of judicial officers, employees, justice system partners, and the public while allowing continued access to court services, the court initiated comprehensive health screening and social distancing protocols. Steps include health questions, temperature assessment, and mask requirements, including providing a mask to any person without one.

- Public areas, including courtrooms, have been designated with signage and floor markings to ensure proper social distancing.
- The court implemented a hardship prescreen questionnaire to reduce the number of jurors appearing at the courthouse. Jurors complete a questionnaire and list hardship factors beyond what jury staff can excuse prospective jurors for under statute. The questionnaires are reviewed daily by judicial officers who determine if the juror should be released, retained, or postponed. This resulted in fewer jurors needing to come to the courthouse, while allowing the Jury Office to provide panels to the trial divisions for jury selection.
- The Law Library Resource Center (LLRC) provided phone and video capability for litigants applying for and securing protective orders and emergency orders who could not otherwise appear virtually in court. The LLRC worked with the Clerk of Court to provide virtual filing of protective orders, allowing the entire process to be performed without the litigant coming to the court facility. Given COVID-related concerns, the same applicants have the option of a completely contactless process.
- During the pandemic, the LLRC provided phone and chat reference services during business hours. For those needing documents, the chat service allowed placing a link within the chat to make documents and other information easily accessible. Additionally, the LLRC provided virtual forms assistance and virtual workshops, with the workshops being provided in the evenings and weekends as well as during business hours.
- In collaboration with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, the court implemented the Jail Court Technology Services (CTS) and the Criminal Department of the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County. This initiative enables court hearings to be held through an interactive audiovisual system (IAS) for eligible in-custody defendants housed at one of the six Maricopa County jail facilities. Created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program provides court access to a specific population of in-custody defendants identified as "Do Not Transport" due to quarantine restrictions or medical observation.

Country Meadows Justice Court
 10420 West Van Buren Street
 Avondale, AZ 85323

- Early in the pandemic when officials directed individuals to stay home, the court:
 - Cancelled all scheduled appearances and continued matters to the end of April.
 - Extended due dates for court-ordered programs and payments plans.
 - Automatically granted a suspension for missed payments.
 - Suspended payment plans for two months on request.
 - Stopped issuing arrest warrants.
 - Ordered the release of those completing jailtime.
 - Suspended self-surrender jail dates and set status review hearings in those cases.
 - Ensured that the limited jury trials that do occur are conducted with social distancing and safety protocols.

- For cases that proceed to trial, the judge explains trial procedure and expectations to the parties during a status conference. Proceedings are more productive and efficient when self-represented parties have this knowledge.
- Because of problems caused or made worse by the pandemic, the court allowed extra time to complete defensive driving school, granted requests to suspend or reduce payment plans for hardship, and considered requests to postpone surrender to jail dates.
- The court used email to send eviction judgments and court documents and allowed parties to submit documents for filing by email.
- The court used the telephone to quash warrants and to manage payment plan payments, suspensions or updates.

Encanto Justice Court
620 West Jackson
Phoenix, AZ 85003

- Allowed virtual appearances, resulting in significantly fewer defaults.
- Attorneys who represent multiple plaintiffs can appear virtually in courts at different locations closer in time. This was not possible with physical travel for in-person attendance.
- Parties benefitted by not having to take off a full day of work to attend proceedings and did not have to make travel arrangements to get to the court.
- The court noted that use of video appearance improves conference calls for both the court and the parties.

Graham County Superior Court
800 Main Street
Stafford, AZ 85546

- Provided masks and enhanced sanitization measures including hand sanitizing stations for the public, staff, and at the security checkpoint.
- Promoted the ability for customers to make payments online and telephonically to reduce the need to come to court.
- In April 2020, the Clerk's Office set up an exhibit email address for attorneys and clients to be able to submit exhibits.
- In June 2020, the Clerk's Office installed plexiglass to provide safety and social distancing for staff and customers.

- In October 2020, Graham County Superior Court began accepting pleadings electronically in Criminal, Juvenile Delinquency, Domestic and Probate case types in addition to accepting Civil e-Filing.
- The Clerk's Office remained open during the pandemic to allow customers to conduct business in person, especially for those without access to a computer.
- The Superior Court transitioned to most hearings being held telephonically or via video, approximately 95 percent.
- Courthouse Security implemented phased screening protocols of all individuals who enter the facility to ensure minimized exposure to COVID-19.
- Jury Trials have been held with heightened precautions for limiting exposure, social distancing, and sanitation.

Lake Havasu City Justice Court
 2001 College Drive, Ste 152
 Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

- Lake Havasu City Municipal Court used virtual platforms for procedural hearings in Arraignments, Pre-trial Conferences, Judgment and Sentencing, Status and Failure to Comply hearings, Specialty Court hearings, and Bench Trials. Virtual appearances helped prevent disruptions to criminal case processing and meeting time standards. Additionally, the Court implemented Form 28 to maintain fingerprint compliance for virtual hearings.
- Extended civil traffic arraignments to 60 days, allowing additional time for defendants to enroll in traffic school and/or set up payment arrangements prior to their ticket being suspended. This lessened the number of suspended drivers' licenses during the pandemic.
- Established a COVID-19 shutdown plan to maintain operations remotely.
- Worked with the local jail to extend orders of commitments while the work release program was suspended per jail COVID-19 policies/protocols. This allowed for defendants who currently have employment to keep their jobs during rising unemployment.
- Opened a teleconference line to provide public access to hearings while limiting the number of individuals in the courthouse. This assisted with social distancing and limiting the number of in-court individuals to the parties in the case.
- The Lake Havasu City Municipal Court did not shutdown. Instead, lobby access was limited to orders of protection, warrants, and calendared hearings, maintaining health and safety protocols.
- Implemented a phone payment line to provide an additional option for customers to contact the court to process payments or pay traffic tickets. Front Counter clerks maintain the

payment line daily and follow up with customers on past due payment contracts to continue to provide a higher level of customer service and access to justice during these changes.

- To account for COVID-19-related illnesses and quarantine periods, the Court had all failure to appear cases reviewed by a judge and provided a 30-day grace period before issuing a failure to appear warrant. This gave defendants the opportunity to contact the Court prior to the warrant being issued.

North Valley Justice Court
14264 West Tierra Buena Lane
Surprise, AZ 85374

- There is no public transportation directly to this courthouse. During the pandemic, using virtual hearings, this court went from an estimated 80 percent self-represented tenant no-show rate to an estimated 80 percent participation rate and more proceedings started on time because physically finding the courthouse was not an issue.
- The court noted that, while in-person appearances allow parties to leave court with a copy of the judgment or court documents, virtual proceedings result in a delay getting official copies to the parties through the mail.

Marana Municipal Court
11555 West Civic Center Drive, Bldg. C
Marana, AZ 85653

- Conducted *ex-parte* protective order hearings telephonically. Before COVID-19, plaintiffs were required to appear in-person in the courthouse for an *ex-parte* hearing.
- Parties in contested protective order hearings were given the option to appear by Zoom. Before COVID-19, all parties were required to appear in-person at the courthouse.
- Conducted review hearings in criminal cases telephonically or by Zoom. Before COVID-19, defendants had to appear in-person at the courthouse. This change appears to have decreased defendants' failure to appear rate.
- Liberally used the telephonic plea and plea by mail processes under Rule 17.1(f) in eligible cases where defendants preferred these options to an in-person change of plea. Before COVID-19, these processes were used less often.
- Permitted witnesses in criminal trials to testify via Zoom, where there was no objection by the parties.
- Held criminal evidentiary hearings via Zoom, where there was no objection by the parties.
- Expanded filings accepted by email.

- Corresponded with defendants and attorneys by email when that was their preferred method of contact.
- Updated jury forms to be accepted electronically.

Maricopa County Justice Courts

- Justice Courts administrators established more than 30 virtual courtrooms and telephones to allow parties to appear remotely for court hearings including civil traffic, eviction actions, and small claims cases and created a guide sheet to send litigants to be prepared for virtual hearings.
- Virtual hearings expanded to criminal arraignments, changes of plea, default hearings, garnishment hearings, and protective orders.
- Court administration modified and improved court forms and procedures to allow for virtual pre-trial conferences and mail-in pleas in criminal cases.
- Several courts conducted trials by video conferencing.
- Court administration adjusted the automated default procedure to allow litigants additional time to pay or resolve their civil traffic violations.
- All courts delayed or rescheduled non-mandated hearings such as civil jury trials.
- To reduce foot traffic in courthouses, drop boxes were installed for litigants to deliver court documents without having to enter buildings.
- For litigants without access to attend court virtually or to print or scan documents, or who had to appear in person, the courts offered see-through barriers and health and safety protocols in the buildings to promote social distancing and safety.
- The Maricopa County Bench Best Practices Committee created a written Best Practice on Disposition of Eviction Matters and amended it seven times throughout 2020 in response to related orders and guidance from state and federal officials.
- In 2020, the justice courts provided two eviction-related webinars for the State Bar of Arizona, five eviction-related podcasts, and five statewide eviction-related webinars for the Administrative Office of the Courts.
- Added English and Spanish COVID-related information, guidelines and forms to the courts' websites to aid court patrons in determining their options for moving forward with court matters.
- Judicial Education Officer Charles Adornetto led statewide trainings for judicial officers on eviction procedures.

- Judges and the courts' Public Information Officer participated in more than two dozen online events related to evictions and court changes due to the pandemic. These events were a mixture of local community meetings, national non-profit sponsored forums, media interviews, government official briefings, and more. Some of the events were in Spanish.
- The courts responded to more than 500 public information requests between March 2020 and February 2021, a 350 percent increase, with 300 of those requests related to the pandemic.
- Arranged constable ride-alongs for media, both national and local, in English and Spanish.
- Made video and interviews with constables regarding eviction procedures available to the media.
- Produced a "*Return to Service*" video in Spanish and English highlighting the safety precautions taken in the Justice Courts at <https://youtu.be/MnwdAgnH21A>.
- Created a procedure for non-part public members to virtually attend court proceedings.
- Added signage for lobbies and courtrooms: some requiring 6-foot distancing, others explaining the reasons for wearing masks.
- Posted social media updates to Facebook and Twitter.

Mohave County Superior Court
401 East Spring Street
Kingman, AZ 86402

- Installed kiosks in public lobbies for customers to complete their online petitions for protective orders started through the AZPOINT online portal.
- Began electronically accepting pleadings in Criminal, Juvenile Delinquency, and Juvenile Dependency case types in addition to already accepting civil e-Filing.
- Offered ZOOM meeting court appearance options in addition to telephonic conference lines for each judicial division to reduce or eliminate the need for customers and counsel to appear in person at court.
- Offered Zoom appearances for seated Grand Jurors.
- Expanded and promoted customers' ability to make payments online, telephonically and at remote locations to reduce the need for travel to court to make payments.
- Offered remote jury selection, juror appearance by ZOOM meeting and expanded the jury assembly room to an off-site location to allow for social distancing, making it possible to conduct jury trials when required.

- Installed plexiglass in courtrooms and staff areas for safety and social distancing.
- Implemented technology for staff to remotely appear for meetings, conferences and training.
- Arranged for courtroom clerks to appear in court telephonically or by Zoom to improve staff and customer safety.
- Kept courthouses open through COVID-19 safety protocols to serve customers who were uncomfortable with or lacked access to computers.
- Surveyed ten jury panels, both in person and Zoom participants, to develop future expansion of the remote jury process.
- Working toward an electronic warrant project and assisting with an electronic evidence pilot project.
- Kyle Rimel, Mohave County Court Technology Services Director, received the G. Thomas Munsterman Award for Jury Innovation from the National Center for State Courts. In response to COVID-19, Kyle worked with the county attorney's office to identify a process, develop procedures, and purchase equipment allowing grand jurors to complete their service remotely through Zoom.

Payson/Star Valley Justice Court
714 S. Beeline Hwy
Payson, AZ 85541

- Court hearings are allowed by phone, Zoom, Skype and, on a limited basis, in person.
- Petitions for protective orders are heard via phone, in person or by Zoom or Skype.
- Eviction Actions and Protective Orders are scheduled in accordance with the rules and parties may appear by phone, in person or online.
- The Court conducts in-custody initial appearances via Zoom from the detention area for defendant and detention safety. These initial appearances are livestreamed via YouTube each day to allow victims and family to observe.
- The Court holds open court each week via phone or in person. These sessions are livestreamed via YouTube and do not allow for interaction with viewers.
- Since the Court started conducting hearings via telephone, party attendance has reached nearly 90 percent compared to 50 percent attendance on a weekly basis before COVID.
- In Guilty or No Contest pleas held via telephone, the Court advises the defendant that the record will reflect that the appearance was via telephone or a waiver was verbal over the phone. Notices are sent via mail or email.

- Traffic hearings are set on request. All parties may appear via Zoom, and when situations allow, by telephone.
- Demands for criminal non-jury trials are set on a limited basis to afford the defendants right to a speedy trial. These are held in person and witnesses may appear telephonically if necessary.
- Civil and small claims cases are set on a limited basis to assure the parties a right to a speedy hearing and with health and safety protocols enforced.
- Individuals who want or need to appear in person may do so, following health and safety protocol. Before COVID-19, all court appearances were expected to be in person.

Pima County Consolidated Justice Court
240 North Stone Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701

- Most proceedings transitioned to the Zoom audio/video platform. Those without smartphones could call in telephonically. The few who had no access to a phone could use phones that were available through security in the court's lobby. The phones could be taken to a private space and were disinfected after each use. Enabled parties to submit exhibits online. Before a court date, parties follow prompts on the court website to upload and mark exhibits for their case.
- Provided video and telephonic technology for remote appearances at hearings.
- Sent notices to parties regarding remote hearing options and instructions.
- Used outbound text message reminders for civil traffic arraignments with a direct link to appear by video/audio.
- Enabled remote appearances for civil traffic arraignments. One week before the arraignment date, the defendant receives a post card in the mail with Zoom meeting information.
- Updated outbound text messages to include Zoom information on civil traffic arraignments.
- Website updated to include information on COVID-19 updates and information on how to access the court.
- Website allows plaintiffs to file a small claims case.
- Moved court forms to the first floor, allowing the public to access forms without going through security.
- Created on-site remote appearance rooms for the public who would not otherwise have access to technology.

Pima County Superior Court
110 W. Congress Street
Tucson, AZ 85701

Court Administration

- The court is upgrading its For the Record courtroom recording system to incorporate streaming criminal and civil hearings for public access.
- Implemented a new, Mobile-friendly courthouse website.

Criminal Cases

- Stakeholders meet weekly to discuss procedures and suggestions for allowing access to the court while protecting the community from the virus.
- The criminal bench greatly increased hearings by telephone and/or video to allow for access to the court without filling the courtrooms.
- The court worked with the Department of Corrections to develop procedures to conduct virtual hearings to avoid needing to transport defendants to the courthouse.

Juvenile Cases

- Juvenile Court implemented Microsoft Teams for video appearances for trials, Family Drug Court, and other hearings as requested by parties.
- For the few cases that require physically appearing in court, two courtrooms were configured to allow for social distancing during trial.
- All other hearings are conducted remotely.
- Remote appearances and socially-distanced courtrooms have resulted in increased attendance at hearings.

Civil Cases

- Civil hearings are livestreamed, promoting public access to hearings.
- All filings are done electronically, allowing the public to file pleadings and motions without having to come to the courthouse.
- All orders and rulings are issued electronically, reducing the parties' need to pick them up from the courthouse.
- Court hearings are conducted remotely, allowing litigants to attend court without having to come to the courthouse.
- Telephone system and video technology upgrades allow the court to communicate clearly with all who need to conduct court business.

Probate Cases

- With the Clerk of the Court, providing e-filing of documents, including access by court appointed investigators and counsel to the electronic case file.
- Updating the court's website to provide clearer information on how to proceed, links to updated forms, and links to legal resources.
- Conducting almost all hearings remotely, primarily by telephone.
- Waiving the cost for certified copies of documents for self-represented litigants and mailing them to the self-represented litigants.
- Making accommodations and allowances for contact restrictions at health care facilities and assisted living facilities as it relates to notice and service of documents.
- Allowing court appointed attorneys and investigators to conduct their work virtually.

Salome Justice Court 1108 South Joshua Avenue Parker, AZ 85344

- After the pandemic began, the default format for civil traffic hearings became virtual hearings, unless the defendant requested a telephonic or paper hearing. If technical issues arise during a virtual hearing, the hearing is switched to a telephonic hearing.
- Before COVID-19, criminal matters required defendants to appear for all but pretrial conferences, which were done telephonically. Now most appearances are done virtually, including initial appearances, arraignments, pretrial conferences, plea bargain review hearings, evidence hearings, hearings on release conditions, guilty pleas and trials.
- For guilty pleas, required documents are emailed to defendants, they are given a date and time for the guilty plea and advised that they must return the required paperwork a minimum of one day before the court date. Guilty pleas may be done virtually, telephonically or by mail.
- Protection Orders may be done telephonically or virtually.
- Before COVID-19, civil, small claims and eviction hearings were held in the courtroom. Those hearings are now conducted virtually or telephonically.

Scottsdale City Court 3700 North 75th Street Scottsdale, AZ 85251

- *Partnership with Domestic Violence (DV) shelters using FaceTime.* Used virtual platforms for applying and securing orders of protection. Before COVID-19, this process involved in-person appearances. A DV Shelter Partnership between Chrysalis and Scottsdale Police Crisis Unit

allows these agencies to contact the court to obtain an Order of Protection via a FaceTime hearing with the Judge in addition to applying online via AZPOINT.

- *Virtual Traffic Hearings.* Used virtual platforms for Traffic Court hearings. Before COVID-19, this process required in-person appearances. The process allows the state and litigants to appear remotely before the Judicial Officer using Microsoft Teams and Zoom via their computers, tablets, and phones.
- *Online Dispute Resolution.* Expanded the virtual platform for Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) by incorporating additional misdemeanor case types that allows for case resolution by pleading guilty telephonically, online video, or by mail without requiring an appearance at the Court. Before COVID-19, ODR did not include virtual appearances. Given COVID-related concerns, the online video ODR appearances relieve litigants from incurring the financial cost of missing work to attend court proceedings, while adhering to health precautions.
- *Availability of Livestream.* Before COVID-19, the court conducted arraignments, bench trials, sentencing, and changes of plea at the court, requiring an in-person appearance. The court implemented virtual court proceeding for all of these and implemented livestreaming to allow victims or other interested parties access to audio coverage. See <https://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/court/streams>.
- *Community Intervention Court.* With the increase of defendants who may be experiencing homelessness and mental health issues, the court partnered with local community social services and behavioral health services to run a specialized calendar. This calendar assists the participants with connecting to community social services and with resolving criminal charges.

Surprise City Court
16081 North Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374

- The Court holds AZPOINT telephonic appearances to conduct contact-less Protective Order hearings, both *ex-parte* and contested. The Court distributed court orders, documentation, and exhibits electronically to the parties. Before COVID-19, this process required in-person appearances by the applicant/plaintiff, and if contested, the plaintiff and defendant.
- In response to COVID-19, the Court provides an opportunity for parties to appear telephonically for Civil Traffic Hearings, assisting with the submission and review of exhibits.
- Documents, exhibits, and orders are received and distributed electronically to avoid in-person appearances and mailing delays.
- The Court considers long-form criminal complaints telephonically with electronic filing and the issuance of signed complaints. Before COVID-19, prosecutors had to appear in-person to swear-in long-form complaints.

- When in-person arraignments resumed, the Court opened a second courtroom, scheduled additional judicial coverage and advisory counsel to manage the increased arraignment docket. Before COVID-19, the Court had one courtroom open for criminal arraignments with a limited number of cases that could be scheduled each day. This change allowed the Court to manage the backlog and avoid further case processing delays.
- For defendants who needed to make a cash payment during court closure and could not access a PayNearMe site, the Court allowed cash payments through a drop box with case-specific information. Before COVID-19, the Court prohibited cash payments from being placed in the payment drop box.
- During court closure, the public could enter the court lobby to use a self-service kiosk to access the Court website, AZPOINT, make online payments, and file motions.
- The Court extended the grace period to 45 days for Failure to Pay/Failure to Appear to provide additional time for defendants to address their case without penalty. Before COVID-19, the grace period for defaults/suspensions was 14 days.

Tucson City Court
103 East Alameda
Tucson, AZ 85701

- Upgraded technology in all courtrooms that expanded access to harder to reach populations.
- Opened a Customer Service Window that allows safer access to the court.
- Worked collaboratively with the City Prosecutor and Public Defender, who share space in the building with the court, to ensure health and safety protocols and manageable court calendars.
- Partnered with the City to improve juror access.
- Conducted trials at City Hall.
- Built a Juror Reporting Center at City Court that allows social distancing and keeps jurors in one building for their entire service. It is now one stop, with jurors reporting directly to City Court.

Arizona Access to Justice Commission Members

Chair

Hon. Lawrence F. Winthrop, Arizona Court of Appeals - Division I

Hon. Samuel A. Thumma, Arizona Court of Appeals – Division I

Members

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Rodolfo Sanchez, DNA People's Legal Services

Dr. Rebecca Sandefur, Arizona State University

Kathy Schaben, Superior Court in Yuma County

Hon. Valerie Wyant, Superior Court in Coconino County

Anthony Young, Southern Arizona Legal Aid

**Special Thanks to the
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